

Colonel White's Briefing of [REDACTED]

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11 May 1961

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Colonel White's Briefing of [REDACTED] on Friday, 5 May.

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1. Col. White briefed [REDACTED] in the former's office in the presence of [REDACTED] and myself. I had provided, first by phone and then on a briefing sheet, notes of [REDACTED] previous briefing by the Inspector General and suggestions for items to be covered in Col. White's discussion. (He made no reference to the former, although he did cover some of the same ground and he did use our suggestions regarding emphasis on communications and "what was right with the Agency" as opposed to the Inspector General's briefing which had inevitably put a heavier emphasis on what was wrong.) Col. White had before him a fairly detailed organization chart of the CIA which he referred to during the briefing.

2. Col. White began by saying that there was a certain resistance-- particularly in the DDI and DDP, but also present in the DDS--among senior people to being "lectured on management by their contemporaries." He then went on to say that Management tended to be equated in the DDI and DDP with "administration." These officers then wished to "wash their hands of it" in the sense of pushing such responsibilities on DDS officers detailed to the DDI and DDP. "In other words," said Col. White, "management in this Agency connotes logistics, and most intelligence and operations officers incorrectly feel that it does not apply to their work."

3. This point was made again when Col. White said that there was a lack of understanding among operational and intelligence officers that they are managers. All of their work in one way or another involves the use of people and the most systematic way of learning to handle people, he thought, is through management courses.

4. The response of officers who had management training had been that this was fine but "how about getting at my boss."

5. Taking these things into consideration, Col. White had come to the conclusion that an outside course was necessary. He then went on to describe the [REDACTED] Course." He said that it had been an uphill battle all the way. The whole idea was foreign to intelligence and operations officers and yet, Col. White went on, he felt it was necessary to get management ideas across to the top people in this Agency.

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6. Since as he had previously pointed out the senior officers resented being "lectured at" by their contemporaries, it was necessary—since training was voluntary rather than obligatory—to get qualified teachers and lecturers with university or other outside backgrounds. "The assumption was," said Col. White, "that if it were possible to demonstrate to top level personnel that management ideas were applicable to their work, it would then follow that these officers would tend to persuade their subordinate officers to come to our own internal management courses. The primary objective was to convince senior officers that they were managers." Col. White said that he felt the 36 officers who had attended the [REDACTED] Course now agree that this is so. The interest of a large number of officers was now aroused and while the Management Faculty of the Office of Training was "somewhat unhappy" at the idea, Col. White felt it was necessary to push ahead and take advantage of the momentum that had been gained.

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25X9A2 7. Col. White then pointed to the organization chart of the Agency and said that we were a big organization. There are roughly [REDACTED] people in the DDS and DDP and [REDACTED] in the DDI. We nevertheless had no staff (by this he meant that there was no senior staff, at the DCI level.) The DDP and DDI were both strong personalities, and according to the chart there was relatively complete delegation of authority to them but "the DCI really doesn't delegate. "The point is," Col. White went on to say, "that the DCI doesn't respect or understand normal Agency channels as, for example, a military officer would. And," Col. White went on, "this is not a bad thing—we are very flexible."

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8. How then is the Agency run? "It is run," said Col. White, "in three meetings a week, with the DCI presiding and the DDP, DDI, DDS, the Inspector General, and various other senior officers present. That is where our policy guidance comes from and from that we are expected to get our jobs done."

9. Col. White then went on to say that as compared with the military "we have lots of paper but no real regulations." He explained that he meant by this that the regulations are primarily "administrative" and are not set up to give policy guidance—which indeed they could not do, since our policy guidance changes day by day with the needs and crises that arise in various parts of the world.

10. Col. White then said that he has lots of responsibilities but that he must execute authority with a light touch. His channel to the DCI was mostly "on an oral basis."

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11. These factors, explained Col. White, resulted in "the most informal organization I have ever seen." Again Col. White explained that this was not bad--it made for the necessary flexibility.

12. Summarizing to this point in the briefing, Col. White said that this kind of organization resulted in an enormous emphasis on people, not on organization. The DCI goes to the individuals by name. Mr. Dulles knows who is expert on a given area by name, but he frequently does not know what a given person's title or organization function is." Again Col. White made the point that this results in the opposite of the stereotyped, bureaucratic organization man.

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13. At this point [REDACTED] remarked that he was soaking up this information like a sponge but he was a little concerned about communications in an organization such as Col. White described. Col. White admitted that this was a major problem and it was further complicated by security restrictions--the need to know. This further countered the organization's communications needs. "It may be that we have carried this too far." Nevertheless the result was an extreme reliance on individuals, and the necessity for those individuals to understand how to handle people.

14. Col. White then went back into the history of the Agency and remarked that as organizations go we are relatively young. "People have risen fast." He said that they have not had the opportunity to be trained in the handling of people in management except by their own experience on the job. We have few checklist types here. Once again, said Col. White, this made for flexibility and it was flexibility that this Agency must have.

15. Since he had emphasized strengths to this point, Col. White said that he would like to say a word about weaknesses. The outstanding weakness, in his opinion, was the reluctance of line managers to accept total responsibility of their people on and off the job. (This was a point the IG had made at considerable length). It was imperative that this weakness be remedied, particularly as senior officers do not have as great an appreciation of this need as, in Col. White's opinion, we should have.

16. What about the motivation of the people in this organization? It was very high. In part this was due to the glamour of the work, to excitement, to "being on the firing line--we are at war." On the other hand, there was a tendency (which again Col. White mentioned as a weakness of certain senior officers) to refuse to face the fact of incompetent people. There are not enough people saying, "Joe, you are not cutting the mustard."

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17. How then would officers who had incompetent subordinates handle the problem? They tended to use the medical staff, security, "anything to get rid of bad ones." He then went on to say that a traditional method had been to give a man a good fitness report and transfer him off to another part of the Agency. The tight personnel situation at the present time made this less and less effective.

18. "Another thing," said Col. White, "has been that our people have not been trained to leave their problems at the office." The military officers were. He said that he did not know what [REDACTED] could do about this situation, but that if he had any ideas he would "put them across to the officers."

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19. Col. White said that we are probably not badly managed--just "informal." He went on to say that he recognized the danger that we as an organization might become too bureaucratic. At this point, [REDACTED] said that he was somewhat concerned about getting the class he would be dealing with to participate vigorously with the cases and materials that he would be dealing with. [REDACTED] Col. White and I assured him that there would not be a lack of participation but rather very vigorous participation. Col. White used the expression, "In general, we are an Agency of fearless people." He said this in a rather rueful way and went on to explain that division chiefs and officers at lower levels did not hesitate to speak up in major policy meetings and disagree vigorously, both with Mr. Dulles and with each other.

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20. Col. White said that if there is a single lesson with which he would like to see the students leave the course, it was that there are "no absolutes." He went on to explain that he meant by this that in management there are no such things as checklists or correct principles to set forth and he further said that there is no "rule book." As a secondary objective, Col. White told [REDACTED] that he hoped that the students of this course would want their subordinates to get similar training.

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21. On several occasions Col. White emphasized to [REDACTED] that the substance of the course was [REDACTED] affair. In connection with this, Col. White said that the OTR management faculty would stand by to help him in any way possible but that "the course is your business."

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22. At [REDACTED] suggestion, Col. White then said a few words about the [REDACTED]. The import of his remarks was that the Agency must stay young because of the nature of its business. (Col. White qualified this by saying that this was a particular requirement of the DDP.)

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23. In connection with the DDI, DDS, DDP, Col. White said that unquestionably the DDP seemed to possess the greatest esprit de corps. The DDI people tended in general to be specialists in certain fields and to have a greater loyalty to their subject matter than to the organization. As such Col. White said that he would like to see more AGENCY esprit de corps and greater homogeneity.

25X1A 24. At this point, [REDACTED] said that he has set himself four goals in this course: (a) to make the students understand that they are managers, (b) to demonstrate, by the case method and other ways, certain attitudes that appear to be typical of good managers, (c) to make the students see in various ways that management cannot proceed by rules and (d) to help the students to think openly about management problems.

25. Col. White approved these goals and said "Above all, the manager is a trainer." [REDACTED] then inquired rather belligerently whether Col. White would be down to open the course. Col. White said that he would do so if his schedule permitted. [REDACTED] said that the best way to demonstrate to the students that management was an important factor in the Agency was to get the "high brass" involved in the sponsorship of this course. [REDACTED] then went on to say that in his estimation Col. White was "high brass". Col. White responded with a smile that he is probably the highest brass that [REDACTED] would have a chance to get to participate and then he agreed to come down to open the course on the morning of 12 June.

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